

FOLGER PARK
(Reservation No. 16)
D Street between Second
and First streets, NW
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS NO. DC-672

HABS
DC
WASH,
1003-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FOLGER PARK (Reservation Number 16)

HABS No. DC-672

Location: D Street between Second and First streets, SE.

Owner/Manager: U.S. government, National Park Service.

Present Use: Sitting park.

Significance: First designated as an open space on Ellicott's plan, Folger Park has been used as a park since it was first landscaped in 1882-84. Its current design represents the park restoration program initiated by the Public Works Administration in 1933. Currently the park is located within the National Register's Capitol Hill Historic District.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of plan: 1792, Ellicott Plan.
2. Original and subsequent owners: Within a tract of land owned by Daniel Carroll, the land for the park was acquired by the federal government for streets and avenues in 1791.¹
3. First improvement: 1882-85.
4. Alterations and additions: In 1936 the park was redesigned with a more formal path layout.
5. Condition: Fair. Rose gardens show neglect, fountains do not function. Asphalt pathways and flagstone pavers are cracked and poorly patched.

B. Historical Context:

This open rectangle at the intersection of North Carolina Avenue and Second and Third streets, SE, first appears on Andrew Ellicott's plan of the city, formed due to D Street's jog to the south upon its intersection with North Carolina Avenue. It was part of a large tract of land owned by Daniel Carroll that reached as far north as K Street, encompassing the Capitol Grounds and extending south to the Anacostia River. It was acquired by the federal government along with the land designated for streets and avenues, since it is technically within the right-of-way of the street system.

The Boschke map compiled from surveys taken between 1857-61, shows several structures facing onto the open space, but the ground appears uneven and the surrounding streets unimproved. Due to the slow development of this section of the city, the open space remained vacant and unimproved until 1884. The most significant development in the area was the construction of Providence

¹ McNeil, 43, 48.

Hospital which presided over the south side of the square from 1872 to 1964. It was erected and run by a group of nuns who purchased the large square lot by lot to enlarge the hospital they had opened for civilians during the Civil War in a frame house on the corner of Second and D streets.² The large brick building doubtlessly contributed to the development of the neighborhood, and by 1876 the open space to the north was referred to in a real estate book as Providence Hospital Square. Although the nuns may have made improvements to the large open space, it was technically under the jurisdiction of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (OPB&G), run by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Col. Thomas Lincoln Casey requested \$3,000 in 1878 to improve the vacant area, and requested another \$4,000 in 1879, probably to grade the park and encircle it with a post-and-chain fence. In 1882, Col. A. F. Rockwell indicated his interest in completing the partial improvements requesting \$4,000 to irrigate and landscape the park. He wrote, "It is proposed to subdrain this reservation; introduce water pipe for irrigation, and gutters and drain lodges, with suitable sewer connections for surface drainage; lay out and construct graveled walks for pedestrian travel; grade, surface-soil and sow down in grass seed those portions of the park designed for lawn surfaces, and plant trees and ornamental shrubs upon the same."³

As an illustration of the financial obstacles faced by the OPB&G, only \$1,000 was actually allocated for improvements that year. The following year the \$3,000 balance was requested in order to complete the improvements and install a "rustic fountain." By 1884 the park was almost complete and was described in the annual report as follows:

The reservation which fronts Providence Hospital was partially improved a number of years since by being rough graded and inclosed with an iron post-and-chain fence. Walks were, however, not introduced at that time nor was there any planting done. With the small appropriation (\$1,000) provided for its improvement during the fiscal year just ended very fair progress has been made. The walks provided for it in the new plan have been outlined, excavated, filled in with broken stone and coarse gravel, and surfaced with fine gravel compactly rolled; the lawn surfaces were spaded, sown down in grass seed and their borders sodded and six lamp-posts, provided with ornamental lamps were erected and connected with street gas mains. A row of young shade trees was planted around the outer margin of the reservation, inside the inclosing fence.⁴

After this initial improvement, President Chester Arthur requested that the park be named after Charles J. Folger, the late secretary of the treasury. In 1885, under the leadership of Col. John M. Wilson, extensive improvements were made to the park. About 1,000 ornamental evergreens and deciduous trees were planted and "settees" placed in position. "This park has been greatly improved, and adds

² Goode, 392-94.

³ Annual Report . . ., 1882, 2742.

⁴ Annual Report . . ., 1884, 2344.

much to the beauty of the locality," Wilson reported.⁵ A layout of the park accompanying his 1885 annual report shows two symmetrical curved paths forming four oval and two teardrop open areas with a central space for a round fountain, the whole resembling a flower. The OPB&G continued to maintain the park, painting and repairing fences and settees, and planting waterlilies in the fountains each summer. Despite the park's elegance, the surrounding neighborhood was still relatively unsophisticated as illustrated by Wilson's concern in 1885 that, "in Folger and Stanton parks the flower beds are still subject to the ravages of dogs, while fowls, which are permitted to run at large on the vicinity, do considerable damage to the lawns."⁶

In 1933 the city parks were transferred to the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, and in the ensuing years, many were relandscaped. The City Beautiful movement and the redesign of the park system by the McMillan Commission in 1901-02, both brought to Washington new ideas about park designs. Parks with curved paths, dense clumps of trees, elaborate flower beds, and exotic plants were redesigned with straight, symmetrical paths, expansive sodded panels, and sparse plantings of native species. A new design for Folger Park was installed during the Depression in 1936 by Works Progress Administration laborers. The new, more formal design consisted of a cross inscribed in an oval with a large square central flagstone patio surrounding an octagonal pool. Four rectangular flower beds were formed in the arms of the cross, and at the east and west sides, large bench and fountain structures made of cast concrete with pebble facing, feature mosaics depicting the landscape design of the park. This design remains largely intact today.

After the Depression, the neighborhood around the park became less prosperous and the hospital, having outgrown its antiquated facility was moved to a new building at Twelfth and Varnum streets, NE, in 1947. The federal government purchased the square south of the park for temporary use by the Commerce Department, and finally razed the decaying hospital building in 1964. To help abate the parking shortage in the city, the Architect of the Capitol attempted to convert the space into a congressional parking lot. But residents, beginning to appreciate the unique quality of this historic neighborhood, resisted and won. The square was landscaped as a large park in 1979.⁷ Now a large expanse of grass with several scattered trees and two criss-crossing footpaths, the park is maintained by the Architect of the Capitol. This open square coupled with Folger Park creates a large open landscaped space in this quiet residential area just three blocks from the U.S. Capitol.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. Overall dimensions: The rectangular park is approximately 365' x 234 and covers about 2 acres.
- B. Materials:

⁵ Annual Report . . ., 1885, 2507.

⁶ Annual Report . . ., 1885, 3837.

⁷ Goode, 392-94.

1. **Perimeter sidewalks:** Brick walks with evenly spaced openings for shade trees encircle the park.
2. **Pathways, paving:** Pairs of about 4'-wide parallel asphalt paths lead from each side to a central flagstone patio laid in an irregular pattern. An oval path encircles the park, and four additional paths lead to the oval from each corner. The perimeter of the park, excluding the sidewalk, is set off by Washington quarter-round concrete coping. The patio and central bed is articulated by stone coping.
3. **Vegetation:**
 - a. **Grass:** Grass is planted in all the panels delineated by the paths, except the flower beds.
 - b. **Trees, shrubs, hedges:** The park is surrounded by a formal evergreen hedge. Similar hedges line the interior paths leading to the central patio. Shade and evergreen trees are planted in the corners of the park leaving the center open and sunny.
 - c. **Flowers, seasonal plantings:** Two rectangular rose beds on the secondary cross axis flank the central octagonal flower bed which is also planted with roses.
4. **Structures:**
 - a. **Benches:** Metal-frame, wood-slat benches are distributed along the interior paths. Two long concrete-aggregate bench/fountain structures establish the east and west termini of the park.
 - b. **Fountains:** Two concrete-aggregate fountains are located on the east and west ends of the park. They are identical and feature wing benches that extend out about 20' on each side. The walls above the semi-circular fountain bowls each feature a mosaic diagram of the park ground plan.
5. **Mechanical:**
 - a. **Traffic signs:** NPS dog-control signs are placed throughout the park.
 - b. **Lighting:** Six mushroom-style lamps are located along the interior paths and rectangular flagstone patio.
 - c. **Ventilation:** Metro-rail runs under the park and a large metal ventilation grate is located in the northwest corner of the park.

C. **Site:**

1. **Character of surrounding structures:** The entire lot south of the park is an open green planted with trees around the perimeter and grass. This was the

former site of the Providence Hospital. Surrounding the park are a mix of two- and three-story late nineteenth- and twentieth-century residences. An elementary school is located on the east side.

2. Traffic patterns: Two-way, two-lane streets surround the park. The park interrupts the flow of North Carolina Avenue, which meets it at the northeast and southwest corners. At the southwest juncture, there is a small triangular concrete traffic island with traffic control signs.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps:

Boschke, A. "Topographical Map of the District of Columbia surveyed in the years '57, '58, and '59."

District of Columbia Board of Public Works. "Exhibit Chart of Improved Streets and Avenues." 1872.

Ellicott, Andrew. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1792.

L'Enfant, Pierre Charles. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1791.

Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Plan of the City of Washington, District of Columbia, showing the Public Reservations." Prepared by Orville E. Babcock. 1871.

Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Map of the City of Washington showing the Public Reservations Under Control of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds." 1884, 1887, and 1894.

- #### B. Park plans: See Supplemental Information below for a list of attached plans. Additional plans are located at the Office of Land Use, National Capital Region.

C. Early Views:

1927: Photograph taken as part of a reservation survey, Office of Land Use, National Capital Region.

D. Bibliography:

Annual Reports of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. Annual Reports of the Chief of Engineers. 1867-1933.

Goode, James. Capital Losses. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

McNeil, Priscilla W. "Rock Creek Hundred: Land Conveyed for the Federal City." Washington History 3 (Spring/Summer, 1991): 34-51.

Record Group 42, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA RG42).

Reservation files. Land Use Office. National Capital Region.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Barthold
Project Historian
National Park Service
1993

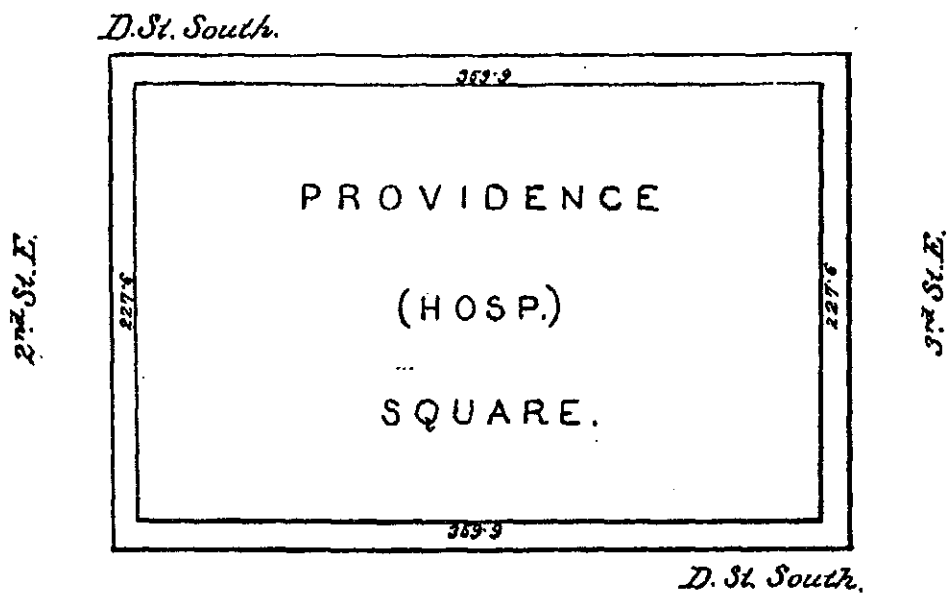
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

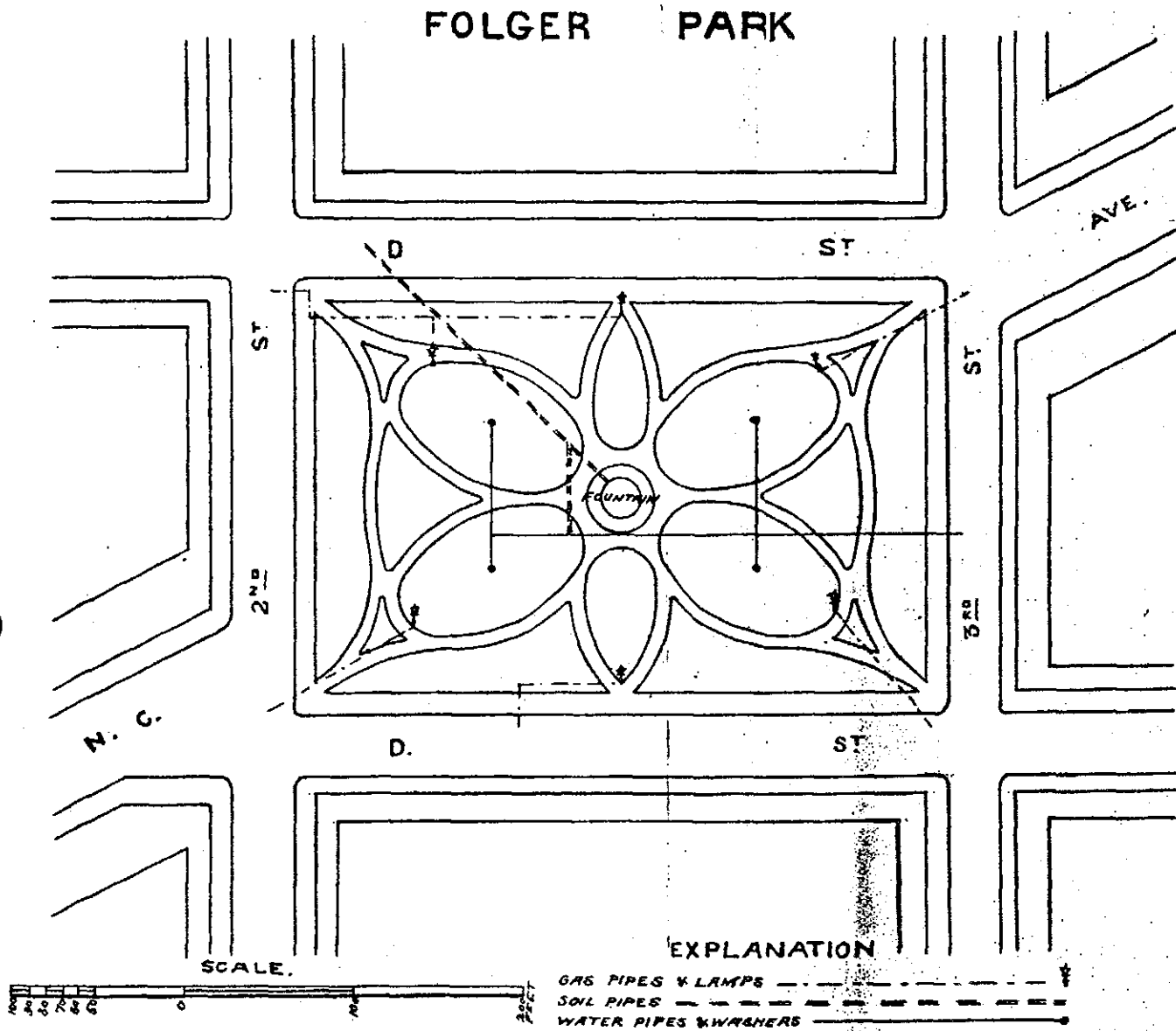
The Plan of Washington, D.C., project was carried out from 1990-93 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division, Robert J. Kapsch, chief. The project sponsors were the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Inc. of Washington, D.C.; the Historic Preservation Division, District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, which provided Historic Preservation Fund monies; the National Capital Region and its White House Liaison office, NPS; and the National Park Foundation Inc.

HABS historian Sara Amy Leach was the project leader and Elizabeth J. Barthold was project historian. Architectural delineators were: Robert Arzola, HABS; Julianne Jorgensen, University of Maryland; Robert Juskevich, Catholic University of America; Sandra M. E. Leiva, US/ICOMOS-Argentina; and Tomasz Zweich, US/ICOMOS-Poland, Board of Historical Gardens and Palace Conservation. Katherine Grandine served as a data collector. The photographs are by John McWilliams, Atlanta, except for the aerial views, which are by Jack E. Boucher, HABS, courtesy of the U.S. Park Police - Aviation Division.

PART V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

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|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Page 7 | 1876: Park plan showing dimensions of an unlandscaped reservation referred to as Providence (Hosp.) Square. "Government Reservations within the City Boundaries," <u>City Lots</u> , Real Estate Atlas (NARA RG42 230). |
| Page 8 | 1885: Park plan show location of gas pipes and lamps, soil pipes and water pipes and washers (<u>Annual Report . . .</u> , 1885). |
| Page 9, 10 | 1905: Park plan with accompanying list showing path layout and locations and species of trees (<u>Annual Report . . .</u> , 1905). |
| Page 11 | 1929: Park plan showing path layout and locations and species of trees, affixed to survey of park elements. |
| Page 12 | 1936: Revised park plan showing new path layout, affixed to survey showing park elements. |
| Page 13 | 1937: Planting plan showing shrubs and seasonal plantings, revised in the 1960s. |



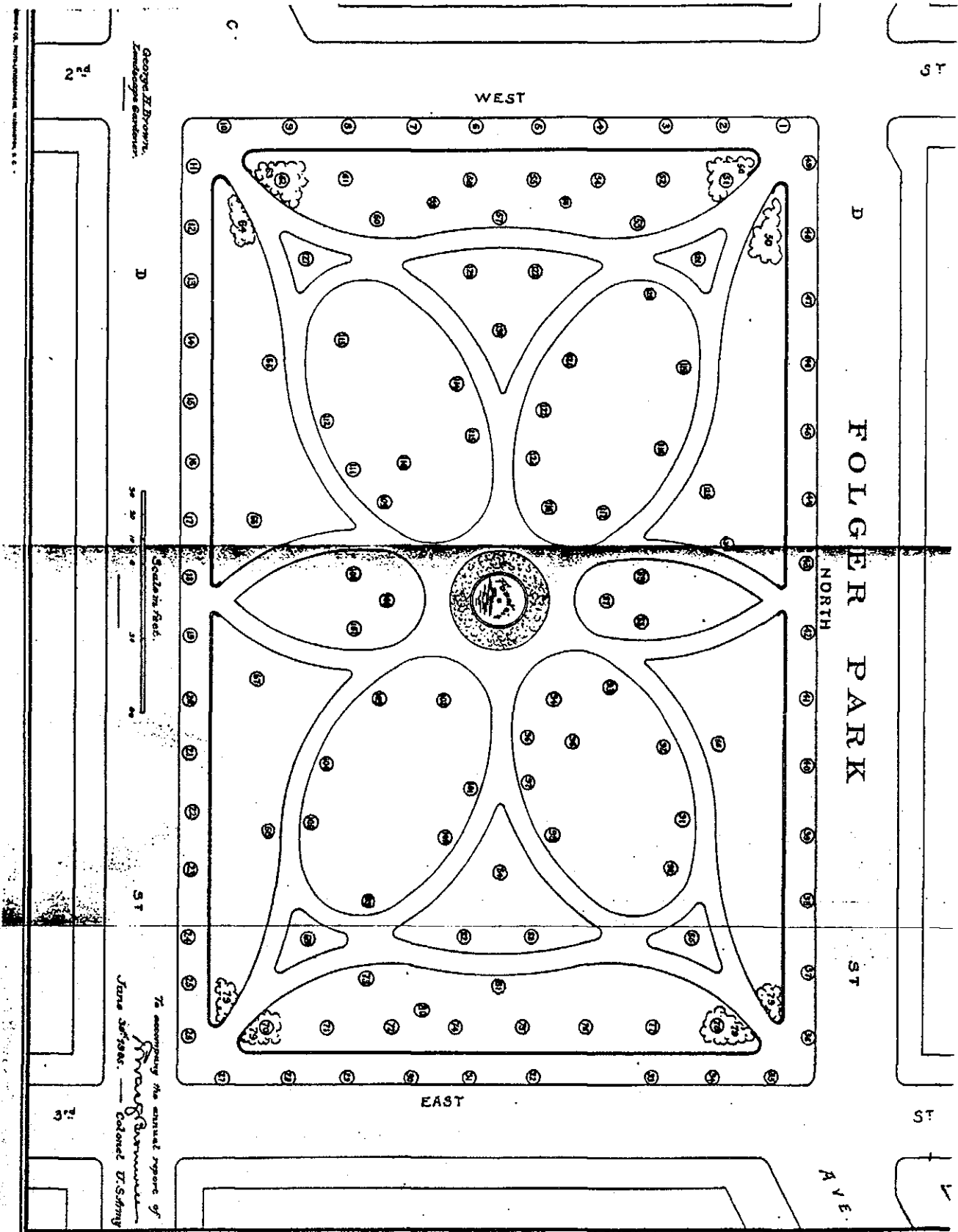


*To Accompany Annual Report of Officer
in charge of Public Buildings and Grounds
for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1886.*

H Ex1 pt2 v2 49

THE AMERICAN GRAPHIC CO. N.Y.

1885



FOLGER PARK.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.	Silver maple.....	Acer saccharinum.....	Native deciduous tree.
11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.	American linden.....	Tilia americana.....	Do.
27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.	Plane tree.....	Platanus occidentalis..	Do.
36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49.	American elm.....	Ulmus americana.....	Do.
50, 53, 54, 79, 79, 79, 79.	Groups of jessamine.....	Jasminum nudiflorum..	Foreign deciduous shrub
51, 52, 54, 55, 58, 61, 62, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78.	Sycamore maple.....	Acer pseudo-platanus..	Foreign deciduous tree.
53, 60, 126, 127.....	English field maple.....	Acer campestria.....	Do.

APPENDIX D D D—PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS.

FOLGER PARK—Continued.

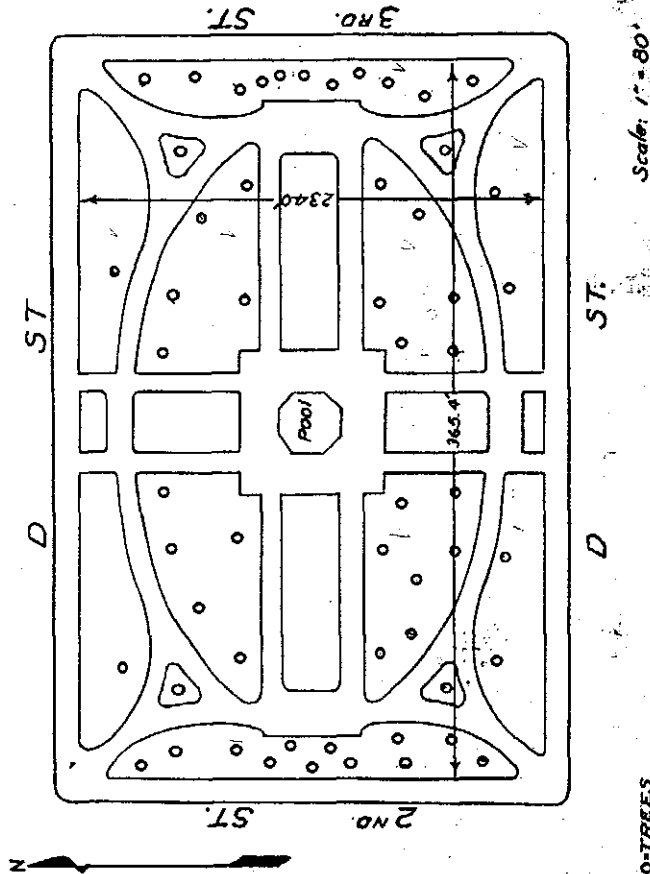
Numbers.	Common name.	Botanical name.	Designation.
56, 59, 80, 84, 99, 120, 120.	English holly.....	Ilex aquifolium.....	Foreign evergreen tree.
57, 81.....	Mimosa tree.....	Acacia julibrissin.....	Foreign deciduous tree.
60, 68.....	California privet.....	Ligustrum ovalifolium..	Native deciduous shrub.
66, 67.....	Purple hazel.....	Corylus purpurea.....	Foreign deciduous shrub.
69, 85.....	Nettle tree.....	Celtis occidentalis.....	Native deciduous tree.
82, 83, 91, 92, 97, 101, 104, 105, 111, 112, 115, 118, 119, 122, 123, 129.	Norway maple.....	Acer platanoides.....	Foreign deciduous tree.
86.....	Japan Judas shrub.....	Cercis japonica.....	Foreign deciduous shrub.
87, 106.....	Camperdown elm.....	Ulmus scabra pendula..	Foreign deciduous tree.
88, 89, 124, 125.....	Purple-flowering magnolia.	Magnolia obovata.....	Foreign deciduous shrub.
90, 113.....	Oriental spruce.....	Picea orientalis.....	Foreign evergreen tree.
93, 109.....	Purple beech.....	Fagus sylvatica purpurea.	Foreign deciduous tree.
98, 100, 114, 121.....	Varnish tree.....	Koelreuteria paniculata.	Do.
102, 116.....	Fern-leaved beech.....	Fagus heterophylla.....	Do.
103, 117.....	European hornbeam.....	Carpinus betulus.....	Do.
107, 108.....	Cucumber tree.....	Magnolia acuminata.....	Native deciduous tree.
95, 110.....	American white birch.....	Betula populifolia.....	Do.
96, 123.....	Stag's horn sumach.....	Rhus typhina.....	Do.
94.....	Japan pagoda tree.....	Sophora japonica.....	Foreign deciduous tree.

[illegible]

Field Work By: 192

VARIOUS FEATURES

BRIDGES	KIND	No.	SQ. FT.
HIGHWAY			
FOOT			
CULVERTS			
WALKS AROUND RESERVATION			
KIND	LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.
			26,542
WATER			
WAYS	LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.
RETAINING			
WALL	LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.
COPING			
Stone	LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.
Concrete			
CURB			
Stone	LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.
Concrete			
GUTTERS			
Stone	LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.
Brick			
Concrete			



0 TREES

SPORTS	No	SQ. FT.	BENCHES	No.	SQ. FT.	SQ. YDS.	BUILDINGS	ML SQ. FT. COVERED
Tennis Courts			Benches				Toilet	
Baseball Courts			Display Fountains					
Baseball Fields			Drinking Fountains					
Hockey Fields			Fountain & Lamp					
Soccer Fields			Gas Lamp Posts					
Cricketer Fields			Elec. Lamp Posts					
Riding Grounds			Fire Plugs					
Band Stands			Water Stand Pipes					
Bathing Beaches			Drainage Traps					
Childrens Playgrids			Trash Baskets					
Athletic Fields			Push Ovens					
Volleyball Courts								
Croquet Courts								
Football Fields								
Polo Fields								
Lacrosse Fields								
Picnic Grounds								
Golf Courses								
Bowling Greens								
Quoits Courts								
Sand Boxes								
FENCES				LIN. FT.				
			Post & Chain					
			Pipe Rail					
			Strand Wire					
			Back Stop					
			Ornamental Iron					
			Mesh Wire					
			Trespass Irons					
TREES				(Kind)	No.			
			Various		56			
HEDGES				(Kind)	No.			
			Various					
STATUES				Names				
WALKS								
ROADS								
PATHS								
RES. AREA (SQ. FT.)				(ACRES)				
					85,503.00			
LOCATION: 2 ND , 3 RD , & D. STS. S.E.								
No. 16								
FOLGER PARK								
IT-1 (30.0-16)								

RES.

RES. AREA (SQ. FT.) (ACRES)

LOCATION: 2ND, 3RD, & D. STS. S.E.

No. 16

FOLGER PARK

IT-1 (30.0-16)

